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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the potential impact of parent involvement in the formal education of their children and suggests ways that teacher education can be restructured to prepare teachers to work with parents. This paper attempts to answer five questions: (1) Why should parents be involved in the formal education of their children? (2) Why should teachers be trained to involve parents? (3) What competencies do teachers need for working with parents? (4) How can teachers be helped to achieve these competencies? and (5) What can be done to enable schools of education to meet the challenge of preparing teachers for parent involvement? Schools of education need to broaden the concept of what teachers do and change the existing conception of "professional status". The paper concludes that it is essential that teachers who work with parents have a value orientation which is non-elitest and which accepts and respects the parents and community of the children they teach. (CS)

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PREPARING TEACHERS FOR PARENT INVOLVEMENT

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October 1974

Center for The Study of
Parent Involvement
Berkeley, California

PREPARING TEACHERS FOR PARENT INVOLVEMENT

This paper asks and attempts to answer five questions:

I. Why should parents be involved in the formal education of their children?

II. Why should teachers be trained to involve parents?

III. What competencies do teachers need for working with parents?

IV. How can teachers be helped to achieve these competencies?

V. What can be done to enable schools of education to meet the challenge of preparing teachers for parent involvement?

I. WHY INVOLVE PARENTS?

The involvement of parents in the formal education of their children is good for the children, good for the parents, good for the teachers, good for the schools, and good for the community. This generalization is elaborated below.

A) Good For The Children

Children profit from almost every opportunity parents may have to demonstrate an interest in them. Parents' increased understanding of school programs and their participation as school resources and change-agents contribute to better preparation of preschoolers and to schools more responsive to children's needs.

Stearns has published an excellent framework for examining the potential impact of parent involvement on the achievement of children in compensatory education programs. (1973) She analyzes three roles commonly played by involved parents:

tutoring their own children; paraprofessional employees; decision-makers. Dr. Stearns outlines the hypothetical links in the chain leading from an aspect of each role to increased child achievement. The framework is based upon the assumptions of parent involvement advocates and the rhetoric of project proposals and various agency guidelines. In some cases it is hypothesized that children do better because of improved self-image; in other cases it is because of improved parent self-image; in still other cases it is due to program adaptations brought about by parent perspectives' influencing decisions.

Dr. Stearns summarizes the research in these areas and indicates where research has been conclusive or insufficient. A high degree of the research cited uses test scores as the measure of how "good" parent involvement may be. Unrecorded but pervasive empirical evidence suggests that parent involvement is "good for the children" irrespective of test score criteria.

B) Good For The Parents

The benefits accruing to parents from their involvement in their children's educational programs ranges from individual self satisfaction to the ability to prevail over oppressive circumstances. In addition there are vast learning opportunities whether in formal parent education programs or through informal interaction with staff and their materials.

C) Good For The Teachers

How parent involvement is good for teachers can be summed up

as follows:

1) it enables teachers to draw upon supplemental and often unique adult resources; 2) it provides teachers with additional information on the children they teach; 3) it permits teachers to understand more about the community served by the school; 4) it opens up opportunities for dialogue between the providers and consumers of educational services, encouraging teachers to recognize other perceptions of what they do; 5) it makes possible political alliances between teachers-as-workers and parents-as-consumers in contending with school bureaucracies.

D) Good For The Schools

Though negative, an appropriate question may be: "Is uninvolvement and apathy good for the schools?" Public and private schools require effective community support for maintaining or expanding educational services. Few groups comprising the general public have the potential that parents have for mobilizing support for (or, at times, opposition to) school activities and affairs. Parents have the power to shut schools down (as the tragic battles over integration in Boston and textbooks in Charleston can attest) or keep an entire educational program in operation without financial assistance (as the Mississippi Head Start parents demonstrated in 1966 and 1967).

Parents are capable of devoting considerable energies to schools in the non-political arena as well. Tutoring programs, playground construction, fund raising are but a few of the contributions parents make to the improvement of schools -to say nothing of the role which parents play in demystifying the schools via the questions they ask.

E) Good For The Community

Since many of the social benefits of parent involvement are implied in the above paragraphs, only a few additional examples will be cited here. What parents learn about schools and teachers is rarely kept a secret. Whether it's called "gossip" or the "diffusion of ideas," parents spread the word about what schools are doing. Involved parents will spread that word accurately reducing the possibility of disruptive and demoralizing rumors. On the positive side, few people can sell the community's educational resources to prospective residents as persuasively as parents of school children. Involved parents tend to have a stake in the schools and, when the schools are good, parents are eager to proselytize.

For many parents, involvement in school affairs leads to their participation in other areas of civic responsibility. The experiences of interacting with school personnel and with other parents during meetings offer parents a form of "reality training" in citizenship. Bad or good, these experiences are learning opportunities for parents to test out and strengthen their leadership capabilities.

Schools can become community development institutions. A significant portion of the community's human and financial resources are already engaged in providing educational services. With effective and creative parent involvement, any school can be the catalyst for a community's improvement -or survival.

There are those who may look at these paragraphs and decry the implications of additional work for the "overburdened" teacher or the "undertrained" administrator. Others may moan that to pay all of this attention to parent involvement negates the mission of the schools: to educate the child. The assumptions on which this paper is based are that the child is (1) brought up by the family, (2) lives in the community, and (3) attends school -in that order. No slap at the school is intended. Educators simply need to be reminded that their perspective is institutionally centered. A child centered perspective necessitates parent involvement and community development.

There is another reason for parent involvement which, because of the highly publicized confrontations between parents and schools, should be obvious. Edgar and Jean Cahn, writing in the late 1960s, pointed out that "Citizen participation is a nuisance. It is costly, it is time consuming, it is frustrating."

> (Yet) citizen participation -real, genuine, meaningful, total- is probably the only guarantee, frail though it may be, that people will be willing to abide by the terms of today's social contract and have sufficient faith in the system to feel that it is in their best interest to wait for the next round of negotiations to press for still better terms within the framework of orderly dialogue and negotiation. Otherwise, the dialectic, the bargaining process shifts to the streets -and the barricades. And citizen participation takes on another and more sinister meaning: civil disorder. The participants term it rebellion. (1968)

Notwithstanding the fact that "rebellion" is a scare-word even to citizens of a nation born of rebellion, there is a more immediate historical context within which to advocate parent involvement. The 1960s provided us with a legacy: the rebirth

of national experimentation in social programming; the Civil Rights Movement; new forms of minority group consciousness and the growing awareness by consumers of the need for collective action. These "social actions" provided a basis for revitalizing citizen participation in the design, implementation and evaluation of human services. In education, parents, particularly members of ethnic minorities, began to challenge large public school systems to make local schools responsive to local traditions and values. ("Began" is not to be taken literally. Recent efforts by minority parents are more like a renascence. See Nicolaus Mills' "Community Schools: Irish, Italians and Jews," in Society, March/April 1974, for a brief study of New York City's "troubles" during the past 120 years.)

In the mid 1960s the Federal government legitimized parent involvement through its policies and guidelines for the Head Start and ESEA Title I programs. Public and professional interest in parent involvement were further aroused by the controversies over decentralization and community control, controversies which clearly are still with us.

As the 1970s began state education agencies developed their own policies on parent involvement. In a survey conducted by the Center for the Study of Parent Involvement in 1973, fourteen states indicated the existence of legislation demanding or recommending some form of parent involvement. The same survey asked each SEA for information on

> any policies or regulations specifically regarding parent involvement in the classroom, in the local school, on school advisory committees, on district advisory committees, in curriculum development, in principal selection, in budget determinations, in school design, and in teacher contract negotiations.

Eighteen states reported some kind of policy in at least one of these nine examples. Significant in its own way was the fact that 48 SEAs responded to a four page, mailed questionnaire entirely devoted to parent involvement. (Safran 1974)

Thus, in recent years, state and federal education agencies, researchers, ethnic constituencies, the organized teaching profession, and the general public have been paying considerable attention to parent involvement. During 1973, three organizations with a national perspective on the subject were created or revitalized: the Institute for Responsive Education (Yale University); the National Committee for Citizens in Education (Columbia, Maryland); the Center for the Study of Parent Involvement (Berkeley, California).

While certainly not of "movement" proportions, it is clear that a momentum has been building to encourage, mandate, and study parent involvement. Yet, somehow, incredibly, this tide of activity and concern seems to have been rising around teacher education virtually unnoticed. For despite the growing interest in and demand for parent and commmunity participation in schools, despite the continuing controversy over school governance issues and the extent to which parents should or should not be involved, teachers are no more being prepared to work with parents and facilitate community participation now than they were ten years ago.

Teachers, particularly elementary school teachers, must be trained to understand and work in the "community domain" if parents are to be involved and the anticipated benefits of this involvement are to be realized.

II. WHY TRAIN TEACHERS TO INVOLVE PARENTS?

Why not forget the teachers and train the administrators, parents, community liason workers or other paraprofessional personnel? A decade of work with parents (in many parts of the United States, of diverse ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds and with a great variety of school experiences when they were children), convinces me that teachers can play the most significant role in educating, activating, and involving parents.

Parents tend to have a "wishful respect" for their children's teachers. That is, parents want to believe that their children's teacher is skillful as an educator, sensitive to the needs of individual children, successful in moving "my" child at a pace equal to or better than other children, and competent to supplement parental guidance and authority. For most parents the teacher is the significant link between them and the education of their children. While many parents are "sophisticated" enough to see the influence of systemic, institutional, and cultural forces on their children's formal education, the vast majority of parents want to see the teacher as the key component.

But perhaps there is something akin to a love-hate relationship between parents and teachers. Waller's observations in his classic Sociology of Teaching, written over forty years ago, may sound quaint but they have a familiar ring:

> From the ideal point of view, parents and teachers have much in common, in that both, supposedly, wish things to occur for the best interests of the child; but, in fact, parents and teachers usually live in a condition of mutual distrust and enmity. Both wish the child well, but it is such a different kind of well that conflict must inevitably arise over it.

> One fact seems to be that parents and teachers are natural enemies, predestined each for the discomfiture of the other. The chasm is frequently covered over, for neither parents nor teachers wish to admit to themselves the uncomfortable implications of their animosity, but on occasion it can make itself clear enough. (1932)

Elements of this conflict are still with us. Waller points to the reinforcement parents and teachers receive from their respective social groups. As a result, he sees futility in parent-teacher work since it is so often directed "at securing for the school the support of parents, that is, at getting parents to see the children more or less as teachers see them."

In his 1932 work, Waller proposed a solution which, though simple, could to this day contribute much to improved relations.

> If parents and teachers could meet often enough and intimately enough to develop primary group attitudes toward each other, and if both parents and teachers might have their say unreservedly, such modifications of school practice and parental upbringing might take place as would revolutionize the life of children everywhere.

In 1969 Humanics Associates of Atlanta, Georgia received a grant from the Office of Child Development to provide training and technical assistance on parent involvement to parents and teachers in Head Start programs in several southeastern states. The proposal for which the grant was awarded suggested that training be applied differentially in each setting to see whether different impacts may be perceived. Thus, in one community assistance was provided in each Head Start center only to parents, in another community only to teachers, in a third community to both parents and teachers. In a fourth community, assistance was provided differently on a center by center

basis.

The emphasis in this project was training, not research. But the project staff (who were early childhood and adult educators) wanted to assess the impact of their efforts. What they discovered was that any training for teachers in working with parents produced new awareness on the part of the teachers, an increase in parent-teacher dialogue and more parent involvement. When parents alone were trained, teachers were ill-equipped to engage in dialogue and the parents, who with their newly developed competence and self-confidence, perceived the teachers' behavior as arrogant and reacted with hostility. Training for both parents and teachers produced the best results: there were major changes in the behaviors and attitudes of both parents and teachers and the changes seemed more enduring than when training was directed toward one group or the other.

Perhaps, to overcome the "enmity" cited by Waller or the apathy and anxiety observed by so many, parents and teachers must receive special assistance. Inservice training, I have found, is not only too little, it is too late.

Teachers must be prepared for work with parents before they start teaching. By the time most teachers are on the job, they have been prepared not to work with parents. Teacher educators must begin to specify competencies for teachers which will enable them to reach out to the community and involve parents.

There is a model which may be useful for the task of developing the competencies advocated here. The following list was designed by the author to "train the trainers" of community

development workers:

Community workers must be...

1. conscious of their own values, how they perceive others and how they, in turn, are perceived by others;

2. skillful in making meaningful individual contacts with people of diverse backgrounds and personal capabilities;

3. capable of bringing people together around common interests and common problems;

4. perceptive in understanding group behavior and skillful in assisting and strengthening a wide variety of groups;

5. knowledgeable about existing community resources, confident in the always vast potential of human resources, and creative in facilitating the development of new resources;

6. capable of enabling individuals and groups to understand and prevail over dehumanizing institutional behaviors and oppressive social conditions.

With the help of this framework it may be possible to specify a useful sequence of competencies expected of teachers' working with parents.

III. WHAT ARE THE PARENT INVOLVEMENT COMPETENCIES?

Seven competencies are listed below. These are proposed as "working statements," and are neither polished nor complete.

Teachers must demonstrate the ability

A) to understand and overcome the barriers to open communications between teachers and parents

B) to engage in one-to-one communication with parents in a variety of settings so that the judgmental nature of the experience is minimized and the parent's sense of competence is maximized

C) to interpret various educational and institutional practices to parents of diverse socioeconomic backgrounds

D) to define and explain specific meaningful tasks for parents in their roles as educators of their own children, as school resources and as decision makers

E) to bring individual parents together and facilitate their addressing and resolving common problems

F) to work with parent groups and develop the leadership skills of their members

G) to understand the nature of educational systems and assist parents in comprehending and modifying the schools so that they can better serve the needs of the children and the community.

The professional socialization of most teachers is a process which confirms the prevailing role model of "school teacher" -a role which emphasizes the mystique of classroom programming and all but ignores the community context of education. The teacher possessing the competencies listed above will understand the importance of family and community variables to the development of the whole child. This understanding must be profound enough to compete with -and overcome- the constraining parochialism common among the subculture of many elementary school teachers.

Future teachers must recognize that they are but <u>one</u> factor affecting the life of a child. This recognition is not advocated as a means of humbling teachers (too much of that goes on already) but rather to make more explicit the multiple factors affecting the child's development. As the most significant professional persons contributing to child development, teachers should be

attempting to facilitate and integrate many variables which optimize a child's life chances. The family and community are key variables which demand certain minimum skills and knowledge.

Teachers need to be aware that they "walk in a long shadow." That is, teachers are perceived as "teachers" and this perception affects from the start the interactions they may experience with parents. As much as they may wish to escape from the "shadow," it remains intact since the role model and behavior of "teacher" are a familiar, almost indelible feature in our social consciousness. Future teachers need to recognize the impact of this social perspective on their role and the effect this will have on communications with parents.

Teachers will also need to understand what lies behind certain parent behaviors in their contacts with the schools. For example, when speaking with teachers for the first time many parents tend to be deferential, even a bit passive. Teachers, on the other hand, are perceived by parents to be confident and, at times, arrogant. Yet, when a problem arises involving the safety of the child or an issue suggests culpability of the school, parents become aggressive while teachers assume a passive/defensive posture.

One of the prime occasions for parent-teacher communications is the conference. Rather than serve to exchange information about the progress of the child (which many conferences are purported to do) and, as such, be a source of mutual good will, conferences tend to be formal affairs and a time for mutual anxiety. Teachers often feel ill-prepared and parents feel judged. In fact, many

parent-teacher transactions are formal and somewhat uncomfortable. Titles and last names are used, social amenities are sparse, and the parameters of conversation are very limited. Teachers must learn to elevate these communications to a more humane and productive level.

Teachers have been the traditional "sole proprietors" of their respective classrooms. Future teachers need to learn how to work as educators and facilitators of parent aides and volunteers. An understanding of task analysis is essential so that assignments to parents serve to meet the educational goals for students as well as to increase parent interest, skills and confidence. An adult relationship must be established with parents. Too often, many teachers forget this and "treat parents like kids."

Teachers need to learn group formation skills in order to help parents work on school and community issues. The value of using individual parents as resources can be multiplied by drawing upon their cumulative talents. Moreover, the job of organizing a parent education class or policy council is too important to be left to chance. These groups need help in getting organized, in maintaining themselves, in focussing on common needs and problems, in discovering and utilizing community resources, in evolving responsible and effective leadership.

Teachers, functioning as they do in a social context, need to recognize the community development potential of the school. The children they teach ultimately will be far more affected by social, economic, and political forces in the community

than by the latest changes in curriculum or teaching methodology. This statement is not intended to negate the essentiality and validity of "what teachers do" but rather to suggest that societal pressures on the growth and development of a child bear far more attention from teachers than hitherto has been the case. What this means is that, at least, teachers need to learn how to assist parents in improving the educational services provided to their community. Teachers need to know how to build upon the concerns parents have for their children's welfare, how to involve parents with one another in insuring that welfare through educational and social action, and how to take the risks required by these tasks and implied by a professional calling.

IV. HOW CAN TEACHERS ACHIEVE THESE COMPETENCIES?

The college or university which includes in its teacher preparation program a component on parent development will have to start by helping their students unlearn some major conceptions of what a teacher is and what a teacher does. Few other occupations are so clearly conceived in the minds of its novices as is the job of "teacher." From the moment that students identify with the image of teacher, the training they receive will be influenced by the experiences they've had throughout their own school years. A new role model must be established immediately and vividly. Students should be encouraged to scrutinize "classroom" and "community" models of "teacher" (as well as any other concepts of the role of educator) in order to discern the openness any concept has for interpretation. Students must be helped to refer to their

feelings about becoming a teacher, drawing upon both the fears and the promises.

A more difficult "unlearning" which must take place is the alteration of existing conceptions of "professional status." Students must learn that professionalism can be a liability in that it sets the teacher apart from ordinary people, particularly the parents of the children they will teach. Teacher education has the task of assisting student-teachers to realize the dangers of professionalization as well as its benefits. It is essential that teachers who work with parents have a value orientation which is non elitist and which accepts and respects the parents and community of the children they teach.

Schools of education must continue the progress they've made in treating their students like adults. Professional elitism pales next to <u>professorial</u> elitism!

There are three techniques familiar to teacher education which could be extended to the new objective of preparing teachers to work with parents:

A) Role playing to simulate teacher-parent interactions and enable students to experience some of the emotional dynamics.

B) Supervised fieldwork with parent and community groups.

C) Working with "master teachers," not necessarily as role models to be emulated but as representatives of existing professional values to be challenged.

Role playing is described by Matthew Miles as

> ...essentially an action, doing technique....Role playing members react to each other spontaneously within the framework of a defined situation which is provisional, or "not for keeps." In this way, behaviors of people can be examined with a minimum of threat, and their approach to the problem can be improved after discussion and analysis. (1959)

At a minimum, teacher preparation should include the following role playing situations in preparing teachers for the competencies proposed above:

-a parent-teacher conference

-encountering an angry parent

-encountering a passive parent

-encouraging parents to participate as classroom observors

-encouraging parents to perform specific "educational" tasks with children at home and in school

-encouraging parents to participate with other parents in existing school or community organizations

-assisting a parent chairperson in planning a meeting

-maximizing the value of chance meetings with parents

These experiences, while simulated, should enable the students to appreciate the multiple human relations factors in teacher parent transactions. Moreover, many of the subtle dynamics of these interactions can be addressed during the analyses succeeding each role playing experience.

Supervised fieldwork with parent and community groups should combine students' observation and participation in "other" groups with increasing their sensitivity to their participation in their own groups. Prospective teachers should be encouraged to reexamine their own group experiences -in social clubs,

professional associations, church groups, etc. -in any formal settings. Student teachers should have the opportunity to work with parents on "real" community issues. Moreover, students and parents should be helped to meet together to share their perspectives of school activities.

The technique of working with "master teachers" is a little more complicated than obtaining guidance from an experienced professional. In this case, the professional is less the guide than the participant in a dialogue. Many of the suggestions made in this paper have been criticized for "leading the lamb to slaughter." Or, to quote a colleague, "Do you realize that the minute your parent involvement teachers get to their schools the old 'warhorses' will cut them to ribbons?"

Student teachers need to be prepared for encounters with the old warhorses. They need to be strengthened for the culture of the school, particularly the debilitating and depressing aspects of institutional behavior which tend to dampen the ardor of new teachers, especially those with "innovative" approaches. One exercise, which has provided support to new teachers in inservice training, I call "The Teachers' Lunchroom Experience."

"The Teachers' Lunchroom Experience" places a new teacher in the midst of Anyschool's teachers' room during $\frac{\text{his}}{\text{her}}$ first week. In the exercise, the student is encouraged to engage other teachers in conversation about a "serious" educational issue such as irrelevant text books, inadequate services, incessant demands for records, insufficient parent involvement. The

student is urged to make some recommendations rather than to simply gripe about the problems. The "other teachers" (usually fellow trainees or training staff) have been preprogramed to respond in a number of "typical" (usually mildly exaggerated) ways. Most of these responses are thus "tedium," "impatience," "don't bother me," "silence." Finally, one of the "teachers" will come over to the "new teacher" and, placing a hand gently, but firmly, on one shoulder will say: "I used to be enthusiastic like you are honey, but you'll learn; just stay here awhile and you'll learn!"

Can the student teacher be prepared for this kind of encounter? Or should new teachers be permitted to "cut their teeth" on reality when they arrive at their first job?

The culture of the schools can be made an overt subject of teacher education. "Master teachers" can be engaged in discussions not as supervisors having evaluative control over student teachers' freedom of speech, but as professionals whose views are sought and whose perceptions are accepted as interpretations rather than truth. The simulation described above can be made a part of students' experiences before they leave teacher education. Value conflicts can be exposed rather than glossed over.

But, perhaps the best preparation student teachers can have for contending with experienced teachers is to establish links with parents from the outset. Such links can demystify the gobbledegook which students teachers get as part of their indoctrination. A concept of accountability can be created

based upon mutual trust between teachers and parents so that new teachers have someone other than old teachers to whom to turn.

V. HOW CAN SCHOOLS OF EDUCATION BE MOVED IN THIS DIRECTION? In its study, State Education Agencies and Parent Involvement, the Center for the Study of Parent Involvement found that only five states responded "yes" to the question: "In teacher preparation and certifying activities are there any specific competencies identified which address themselves to work with parents?" (N=48; Ohio and New York never responded.) Among the fourteen states reporting legislation on parent involvement, only two said that they had such competencies; of the eighteen SEAs with policies or regulations on parent involvement, there were three possessing parent involvement competencies. No states indicated any legislative or state education agency compulsion on schools of education to extend teacher training to the community domain.

There is an impressive record of institutional change having been brought about through legislative and administrative mandate. Local school districts and many individual schools have "gone through some changes" since the advent of Head Start, Follow Through, and Title I. Many other human services institutions have changed their practices because of external directive -including colleges and universities. Schools of education could use such directives in order to extend their concept of what kind of teacher they are preparing.

My first proposal for moving schools of education toward a

greater parent and community awareness in teacher education is to mandate some form of consultation with parent and other lay groups in the design, implementation and evaluation of teacher training activities. This is currently taking place -in a modified form- in California.

The Commission for Teacher Preparation and Licensing (Ryan Commission) requires the following prior to approving program plans for teacher education:

> 1.1.2 Cooperating communities, school districts, teachers, and teacher candidates, carefully selected, involved in, and committed to program development.
>
> Between the institution, school system, and community: The involvement of school district personnel, teacher candidates, and community agencies in program development, implementation, and evaluation should be reflected in the program activities as stated. School districts should insure minority participation in proportion to minorities in the communities served. Communications from the school district should include responses from parents and groups in communities served. Evidence should be provided to show that contributions from all groups were included in developing the program. (Manual for Developing, Evaluating, and Approving Professional Preparation Program Plans for Multiple and Single Subject Credentials, rev. 8/7/73)

Though there is a burden on the teacher training institution to document the involvement demanded above, the effectiveness of the intended participation is in question. Schools of education have had so little experience in working with lay groups that, without either more directive guidance, technical help, or both, there is little likelihood that parents and other community representatives will play a meaningful role. The Commission has, at least, established the principle of inclusiveness. Time and experience may see parent and community involvement in teacher education planning become a fact.

My second proposal for reorienting schools of education toward parent involvement is to include parents as teacher educators. Parents are resources for student teachers; they can be paid consultants and perform formal roles as lecturers or seminar leaders; they can participate in discussions of methodology, curriculum development, classroom management, and professional development. They can even supplement the work of field instructors observing classroom performance and participating in supervisory conferences. Student teachers should be able to experience parents as people with diverse interests, values, perspectives, talents, etc; stereotyping would become more difficult and the process of professionalization could proceed on a less elitist basis.

My third proposal begins with the implementation of the ideas discussed above. Parents could be involved as <u>teacher educator educators</u>. While institutional practices must change if schools of education are to prepare teachers to work with parents, so must the perspective and practices of individual faculty members. I am not proposing that education faculty enroll in any classes or field work activities -that is because such a proposal would go unheeded save for the least status conscious professors. I am proposing that interaction be facilitated between parents and education professors so that these faculty members, who operate far from the community and its reality, have the chance to reorder their concepts of the teacher.

Some form of training would be valuable for teacher educators if they are to rethink and restructure the preparation they

offer to others. Thus, a fourth proposal is to invite teacher educators to attend workshops designed to draw upon their experience and knowledge so that we can get about the job of preparing teachers to work with parents. Such workshops are already taking place to assist practitioners and staff development personnel on an inservice basis. (The Home and School Institute, Washington, DC and the Center for the Study of Parent Involvement offer educational opportunities of this kind.) Associations of teacher educators may need to be nudged a bit if teacher trainers are to take advantage of this form of training.

My final proposal is to place the burden, once again, on parents. Parents can ask some amazing questions of the right person in the right place. Perhaps they should begin to attend meetings of teacher educators, maybe even a faculty meeting. After all, the teachers being produced this year will be teaching their children in the years to come. It is very possible that the restructuring of teacher education so that teachers are prepared to work with parents will begin like this:

(Spokesperson for thirty parents assembled peacefully in the hall outside the office of Dean Strumpht of the School of Education of Happy Valley State) "Good Morning, Dean Strumpht. We had a discussion at our meeting last night and decided to talk to you about teacher education."

(Dean Strumpht) "But...What...?Who...?"

(Spokesperson) "Yes, I realize that you are a busy person, but everyone thought that if anyone knew the answers to our questions it would be you. Some of us have been getting tired

of the same old hassles at the school every year. In fact, several of our parents said that they have had the same kind of hassles at the other schools their children went to before moving here."

(Dean Strumpht) "What...?Where...?"

(Spokesperson) "We don't want to bore you with the details, but we do want to know how teachers are being trained here at Happy Valley. After all, some of your students may be teaching at Kinder Hollow Elementary School next year or the year after and we want to know whether you're preparing them for what they're going to face."

(Dean Strumpht) "Kinder Hollow...? Is that far from here?

(Spokesperson) "Now, Dean Strumpht, let's not get off the subject. We want <u>you</u> to tell <u>us</u> what you do here. Isn't that right parents?"

(Thirty Parents) "Right." "Sure." "Right on." "Let's hear it, Deano!" "Tell us what you do here!"

(Dean Strumpht) "Well, you see, that's a very complicated question. First, there are philosophical, psychological, sociological, methodological, geographical...considerations to be considered."

(Spokesperson) "Dean Strumpht, we just came from the Dean's Office at the University; they ran the same stuff on us and even said 'phenomenological'; now are you going to talk with us or at us?"

(Dean Strumpht) 'Uh....Umm...Nothing like this has ever happened here before. Would you like to visit some of our classrooms and talk to our students and faculty members?"

(Spokesperson and Thirty Parents) "Hey-hey, Deano, you're okay! The Dean is together; we're finally getting inside to see what they do. Far out!".

Such a scenario is unlikely because so few parents see the school of education as the most immediate cause of woe. Their problem is their children's teachers and the local school. However, I predict that parents will soon be taking on the places where teachers are trained -not because training results in "bad" teachers but because parents need strong teachers with whom to ally in fighting the educational inadequacies and inequities in their communities.

The teacher -as a professional person and as a concerned human being- is in a unique position to improve the life opportunities for children. Schools of education need to broaden the concept of what teachers are and what teachers do so that dialogue is the mode through which teachers and parents interact. A professionalism based upon self-interest is a far cry from the ancient "calling" to which people have always responded in their desire to become teachers. Dialogue with parents draws teachers toward the community where all must strive together on behalf of all our children.

> Founding itself upon love, humility, and faith, dialogue becomes a horizontal relationship of which mutual trust between the dialoguers is the logical consequence.
>
> Pedagogy of the Oppressed
> -Paulo Freire

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